

Today's News - Monday, April 30, 2012

EDITOR'S NOTE: Apologies for missing Friday's post (we've been brought low by a nasty flu-bug). So lots of catching up to do...

- ArcSpace brings us eyefuls of the Scolari exhibit at Yale, and Zellner's gallery in Los Angeles.
- Hawthorne x 2 + Lubell on L.A. Metro's (odd?) competition for the massive Union Station project: "vision boards" by "an embarrassment of design talent" that apparently will have no bearing on the outcome ("Talk about raining on your own parade").
- Moore gives (some) high marks to London's mayor for his "combination of show-off whatsits and fairly sensible stuff" that "deserve credit for getting some things done that make London, in a modest way, a better place to live."
- Six "big thinkers" offer their ideas to revive the U.K.'s high streets: Adjaye: bring in public buildings; de Botton: "make psychotherapy like a visit to the hairdresser."
- An Australian theater director looks at the country's love of converting historic buildings into multi-purpose arts venues: "this can result in creative white elephants and financial black holes"; there have been successes, "but there are duds...flexibility is confused with adaptability."
- Vanstiphout minces no words about what he thinks of Rotterdam's "rush to make architectural masterpieces" - or rather "gigantic office buildings" by famous architects.
- Duany is alarmed by the movement against change moving to the extreme: it's no longer "what is old is good - it's just what is new is going to be worse"; the architectural profession is partially at fault - it needs "to get its act together and actually recover the standing that what we do is better, it's actually worthy."
- King cheers the "rugged" Lands End Lookout on one of San Francisco's best sites: it is "assertive and inviting" with an "architectural response that is tough rather than meek" with touches that "make the connection to place without making a fuss."
- Heathcote x 2 (in a double-good mood): Koolhaas's plans for a new Moscow art gallery in Melnikov's 1926 bus garage in Gorky Park will retain "signs of age and the original Socialist Realist iconography with the dignity and respect," and will be "generous to the park and the public."
- He heads to Las Vegas and finds the Smith Center, "standing on the edge of a dusty plot," a "glimpse of genuine urbanity" in a place that has practically none (he also likes the "impeccable Jazz Age art deco" vibe - it's "an enjoyably complex work").
- Kamin on the challenges facing the architect who revamped Boston's Fenway Park tasked with reviving Chicago's Wrigley Field: "political landscapes surrounding the two ballparks differ...Which is why revamping Wrigley could make redoing Fenway look like a walk in the park."
- Lubell reports on the "archi-crime of the year": despite protests, a house designed by FLW fils (that looks - 'er looked - pretty amazing) bites the dust to make way for a "Mediterranean McMansion" (with links to the sad details).
- On a brighter note, Dobrzynski cheers the High Line's new curator for creating "an art treasure hunt" along the park's pathways.
- Berkemeier is named the Australian Institute of Architects' next president.
- We couldn't resist: 1 WTC (a.k.a. Freedom Tower) is set to top off the 100th floor today, so Chaban offers us EarthCam's time-lapse video of the tower's 8-year rise - in 80 seconds!
- Call for entries: Building Malaria Prevention: A Global Design Competition for a community in Cameroon.

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-- Exhibition: "Massimo Scolari: The Representation of Architecture, 1967-2012"; Architecture Gallery, Yale School of Architecture, New Haven, Connecticut
-- Zellnerplus: Matthew Marks Gallery, Los Angeles, California

Metro douses expectations on Union Station project: The agency is facing an identity crisis over its relationship to architecture and urban design: Talk about raining on your own parade...Wait, what? So the idea was to bring in the far-flung members of the six shortlisted teams...to publicly present ideas that will have no bearing on the actual competition? Apparently, yes. That was precisely the idea. By Christopher Hawthorne -- Moore Ruble Yudell/Enrique Norton/Ten Arquitectos/West 8; IBI Group/Foster + Partners; Renzo Piano/Parsons Transportation Group; EE&K Architects/Ben van Berkel/UN Studio; Gruen Associates/Grimshaw Architects; NBBJ/Ingenhoven Architects - Los Angeles Times

Star architects unveil wild plans for Los Angeles' Union Station circa 2050: ...some of the most prominent firms in the world...joined a long list of well-known local designers...an embarrassment of design talent...But it remains impossible to guess what the connection will be between these visions...and what is ultimately built. By Christopher Hawthorne -- Renzo Piano; UNStudio/Ben Van Berkel; Moore Ruble Yudell; Enrique Norton/TEN Arquitectos; West 8; EE&K/Perkins Eastman - Los Angeles Times

State of the Union: Shortlisted teams unveil vision boards for LA's Union Station area: Spoiler Alert: The schemes you are about to see, while inspiring and informative, will not become reality...Martha Welborne...appears to be fighting an uphill battle to get the bureaucratic and engineering-driven agency to embrace design. Sam Lubell -- EE&K/UNStudio; Grimshaw/Gruen; NBBJ/Ingenhoven; Foster + Partners/IBI; Moore Ruble Yudell/Ten Arquitectos/West 8; Renzo Piano/Parsons Transportation Group [images] - The Architect's Newspaper

Borisopolis: London under Boris Johnson: The Emirates Air Line cable car, new Routemasters, decluttered streets, the Olympic Orbit sculpture...after four years...as mayor, London is a mixture of vanity projects and a few good ideas...a combination of show-off whatsits and fairly sensible stuff...deserve credit for getting some things done that make London, in a modest way, a better place to live. By Rowan Moore - Observer (UK)

Can anyone save our high streets? We're shopping on the internet. Recession is killing the big chains. So what should we do with the streets that were once the heart of our communities? Six big thinkers reveal their plans: Martin Boyce: turn high streets into urban playgrounds; David Adjaye: bring public buildings on to the high street; Alain de Botton: make psychotherapy like a visit to the hairdresser - Guardian (UK)

Edifice complexes and heritage values too often a pain in the arts: Governments love to recycle historic buildings as multi-purpose arts venues, but this can result in creative white elephants and financial black holes...The conversion of existing buildings is a largely successful aspect of our theatre architecture...But there are duds..."Multipurpose = no purpose"...Flexibility is confused with adaptability. By Julian Meyrick - The Age (Australia)

Which button should we be wearing? The rush to make architectural masterpieces is costing Rotterdam dear: Project developers are building gigantic office buildings...an absurd pyramid scheme of empty real estate, artificially high values and multiplying iconic new buildings by famous architects... By Wouter Vanstiphout -- Office for Metropolitan Architecture/OMA - BD/Building Design (UK)

Andrés Duany promotes unbiased democracy in community planning: ...movement against change is getting more extreme..."It used to be people preserved buildings of historical importance...and now...It's not what is old is good -- it's just

what is new is going to be worse. That partially has to do with the architectural profession. (It) has to get its act together and actually recover the standing that what we do is better, it's actually worthy." -- Duany Plater-Zyberk; Congress for the New Urbanism/CNU- Palm Beach Daily News

Rugged Lands End Lookout deserves its own look: Assertive and inviting at once, the compact structure commands one of San Francisco's best sites...The architectural response is tough rather than meek, and it enriches a location that already is one-of-a-kind...Other touches make the connection to place without making a fuss. By John King -- EHDD; Macchiato [slide show]- San Francisco Chronicle

Architect who thrives on neglect: Rem Koolhaas's design for Dasha Zhukova's new Moscow art gallery makes a virtue of the site's history: Garage Center for Contemporary Culture...signs of age and the original Socialist Realist iconography...will be retained and treated with the dignity and respect...generous to the park and the public... By Edwin Heathcote -- Konstantin Melnikov (1926); OMA- Financial Times (UK)

Postcard from ... Las Vegas: The Smith Center is an attempt to create a genuinely public place for residents rather than visiting gamblers: ...standing on the edge of a dusty plot. The lonely building has been given civic presence...a glimpse of genuine urbanity. It is not, however, entirely unthemed -- it is executed in impeccable Jazz Age art deco...an enjoyably complex work. By Edwin Heathcote -- David M Schwarz Architects - Financial Times (UK)

Reviving an ancient ballpark, version 2.0: Can Fenway's renovation architect work the same magic at Wrigley? ...political landscapes surrounding the two ballparks differ...Which is why revamping Wrigley could make redoing Fenway look like a walk in the park. By Blair Kamin -- Charles "Chuck" Izzo/D'Agostino Izzo Quirk Architects [images]- Chicago Tribune

Archi-Crime of the year: Lloyd Wright's Moore House Destroyed: Frank Lloyd Wright's son was one of California's most talented modernist architects, but he was overshadowed by his father's fame and notoriety. Wright's lack of press largely led to the destruction...The city council denied an appeal from the Los Angeles Conservancy...the owner wants to build a Mediterranean McMansion in its place. By Sam Lubell [images, links to details]- The Architect's Newspaper

Take The High (Line) Road: Art CAN Be Fun: If one of her first projects is an indication, I like the way Cecilia Alemani, the new art curator at the High Line, thinks..."Lilliput" involves six artists who made and sited their pieces among the vegetation and along the pathways. For visitors, it's an art treasure hunt. By Judith H. Dobrzynski [links to images, info]- ArtsJournal

University of Sydney architect named president of peak body: Paul Berkemeier will become the next president of the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA)...in May 2013. - Asian Correspondent

As 1 World Trade Center Approaches Tallest-Building-In-New-York Status, Watch It Rise in 80 Seconds: EarthCam, which has been monitoring the site with great fervor, put together a timelapse of the tower's rise. By Matt Chaban -- Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) [video]- New York Observer

Call for entries: Building Malaria Prevention: A Global Design Competition: improving 24 housing units and training locals in the community of Minkoaméyos, Yaoundé, Cameroon, to be better equipped in combating malaria; deadline: June 20- ARCHIVE (Architecture for Health In Vulnerable Environments)

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